Seaweed Exploration

The Guernsey French for seaweed is Vraic.

I looked around at the hardy group of people who had met in a car park next to the beach kiosk at Port Soif, Guernsey. It was raining, but we all had wellies and waterproofs, and so were prepared.

Ben, the seaweed man, introduced himself and explained that we were going to forage in the rock pools, whilst the tide was out, and learn all about seaweed. He is a well know local figure, having gone into a partnership with the island gin distiller to make gallons of seaweed hand sanitiser during lockdown, a lotion which also moisturisers your hands at the same time!

We set off to the beach and the first stop on the sand was the drift seaweed. Each of the different green, brown, yellow and red species contained slightly different minerals, so it makes an all-round excellent fertiliser and or mulch.

We started looking down almost immediately as we stepped off the sand on to the exposed rocks. Different species grow in different zones along the tide line. Each time we were introduced to a new seaweed, picked freshly off the rocks, Ben showed us how to wash off the salty water and we were able to have an instant tasting session. From carrageen for thickening sauces and stews, the umami taste of serrated wrack, and the delicate truffle taste of pepper dulse, we feasted in the different tidal zones.

Ben relayed tales about how, in our sparkling clean seawater on the west coast, every seaweed we saw (there must have been nearly a hundred different varieties) was edible. But ingesting the rich source of protein and minerals in food was not the only use. It makes an excellent all-round fertiliser, has medicinal uses and it is being investigated to help reduce COVID symptoms. Ben told us how he wrapped his broken leg up in kelp a few years back, and the surgeon was impressed with the healing.

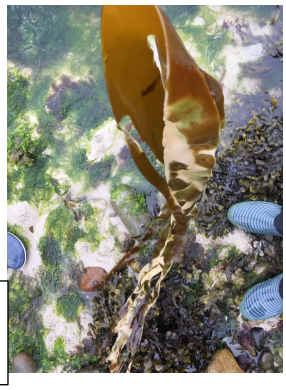
An endless rich source of minerals and protein that can be dried, pickled, boiled or fried, Guernsey is one of few places where is not against the law to help yourself. Indeed, for many centuries that is exactly what the locals have done, using this magical source of sea “gold” in their everyday lives, collecting cart loads regularly at low tide, although the tradition and knowledge has died out in modern times.

Bladder Wrack. Squeeze out the gel and moisturise your hands.

Exploring the tidal zones.

Sea lettuce – try frying it.

Sea spaghetti



Kelp. It is bit bleached as it is usually found under water.

Pepper Dulse
Tastes like truffles

Serrated Wrack
Umami taste.